Debunking Readers Digest on Vietnam's Civilian Dead, P. 3

Now If We Can Only Capture A Picture of Mao, Our Victory Will Be Complete

"The search for installations of the central guerrilla headquarters, which is one of the objectives of the [Junction City] operation, may have borne fruit at last. Units of the 173rd Airborne Brigade reported the discovery of an enemy base camp . . . apparently used for training. The booty, the spokesman said, included portraits of Communist leaders and plaster busts of Ho Chi Minh and Stalin."

—Tom Buckley from Saigon in New York Times *March 2*

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To Punish Hanoi and Humiliate Moscow

The most revealing remark in the several days of fitful Congressional debate here on the Vietnamese war was made by Senator Jackson of Washington, who has come to be Johnson's main spokesman on NATO as well as Vietnam. This remark, on the Senate floor Friday, Feb. 24, deserves close study. For it indicates that the Administration's real attitude toward the Russians is quite different from what one would suppose in the light of its "bridge-building" campaign in Eastern Europe. This is what Jackson said—

There are some reasons for thinking that the Soviet leaders would prefer a settlement. The bombing of the North, for example, is probably a source of embarrassment, for it demonstrates that the Soviet Union cannot prevent the United States from bombing a brother Communist state. One can surmise that the Russians are having to do a lot of explaining in other Communist capitals. FOR MOSCOW'S SITUATION IN VIETNAM PUTS IN DOUBT WHAT SHE COULD DO TO PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF OTHER COMMUNIST STATES IF THEY SOMETIME FOUND THEMSELVES IN SIMILAR JEOPARDY [Emphasis added]. In this sense, the bombing has political significance—control over it is one of the few political assets and bargaining levers we have in encouraging the Russians to pressure Hanoi to deescalate militarily and to negotiate.

The U.S.S.R. as Paper Tiger

This says, indiscreetly, what the Administration has not publicly acknowledged—that it sees the bombing of the North not only as a way to "punish" Hanoi but to humiliate Moscow, to show it up as a paper tiger in the eyes of its satellites. "Here," Jackson elaborated a few minutes later in a colloquy with Miller of Iowa, "is the leader of the Communist world, the country armed with nuclear rockets and weapons, the country with a great submarine fleet, the country with enormous ground forces, and yet it cannot stop the bombing of the North." Jackson repeated that this "embarrassing" situation "is an important factor in inducing the Soviets to get Hanoi to the conference table"—and presumably to surrender on our terms.

In this perspective the Vietnamese war must no longer seem a distant and peripheral affair to Moscow but a threat to its hegemony in Eastern Europe. We offer trade and tariff concessions to its satellites and at the same time by our bombing of Hanoi make them wonder whether they can count on Moscow in the event of some similar confrontation in Europe. Thus we may seem to be trying by fear and favors to weaken the bonds which unite the Soviet bloc. This may seem devilishly clever to White House Macchiavellis like Walt Rostow but it is also very dangerous. This is the kind of threat military men seize upon as an argument against "appeasement." Just as our military men say that if we do not defeat the Communists in Vietnam, we may have to do so on the beaches of California, so the Russian military must be saying that if they let the U.S. have its way in Vietnam, Washington may be encouraged some day to risk forceful intervention in the event, let us say, of a new uprising in East Germany or Hungary. Eisenhower and Dulles were afraid in 1953 and 1956 to attempt the "rollback" they had promised in Eastern Europe. They signalled Moscow we would not interfere either in East Berlin or Budapest. But if the Russians let Hanoi go down in ruin—so the military may be arguing in the Kremlin—the U.S. next time might be bolder. It may be as far-fetched to equate Vietnam with East Germany as with California. But this is how Sarajevos spiral into world wars.

The strategy of humiliation disclosed by Jackson has been encouraged by the uncertain responses of the Soviet Union in the Vietnamese conflict and by the convulsive disorder in China. Our military are emboldened to believe that we can eventually mine Haiphong and endanger Soviet shipping without provoking a military showdown with Moscow, and that perhaps we can even invade North Vietnam—at least the southern panhandle—without bringing China into the war.

(Continued on Page Two)

Winning the Hearts of the People Dept.

Lang Vei, Vietnam, March 3—A village official of Lang Vei whose two sons were among more than 100 South Vietnamese killed when the village was bombed —apparently by mistake—wept tonight, saying: "Now I have no sons, no home, no rice." . . . Many of the population of 2,000 had come in from outlying areas for protection from the Viet Cong and the war. They thought they were safe until last night, when two dark-colored delta-wing jets, unidentified but believed to be American or South Vietnamese, killed an estimated 105 people and wounded 175 in a 25-minute bombing and strafing attack. The villagers scrambled into bunkers underneath their homes but many died, some suffocated . . . An American civic action company commander, Major Wm. Morley, said gratuities would be paid to the villagers at the rate of $50 for each dead person, and $10 to $40 for each wounded. "This does not admit liability," he said.

—Reuters in The Times *(London) March 4*

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(Continued from Page One)

New escalations foreshadow more to come. One military official in Saigon indicated to Ward Just (*Wash. Post*, March 1) that if the harbor of Haiphong is ever mined, this can be made to seem just an extension of the mining we have begun in the rivers and estuaries of the North Vietnamese panhandle. Such inch-by-inch "salami" tactics are characteristic of Johnson's constant escalation of this war.

Getting Ready for Invasion?

The artillery and naval bombardment of southern North Vietnam between the 17th and 19th parallels looks like a "softening up" process in preparation for an invasion, as does the news that Westmoreland has been given "carte blanche" to direct air and naval bombardment as he sees fit from the 17th parallel 60 miles northward to Donghoi (same *Wash. Post* dispatch and *Le Figaro* from Saigon Feb. 28). Alarmist reports are being leaked of some 35,000 North Vietnamese troops concentrated above the 17th parallel as if for invasion of the south, though other sources, according to the AP from Saigon (*Wash. Star* March 3) said "a major part of the North Vietnamese force is digging conventional defense positions as if they feared the large Marine force south of the demilitarized zone would attack north." Johnson sees the Vietnamese war in terms of the Korean war, and may be thinking of an "Inchon landing," like the daring stroke by which MacArthur landed troops north of the 38th parallel behind the enemy's lines. A serious expansion of the war may be in the offing.

An invasion of North Vietnam may not make sense to sober people. It may look like attempting to alleviate a headache by adding a second head equally afflicted with migraine. An invasion would double the war overnight by bringing the North Vietnamese army into the field. But our military are not so sober. Their sensational "search and seize" operations in South Vietnam are turning out to produce remarkably few seizures, though these are the most expensive searches of military history (see box bottom of p. 2). The latest issue of *U.S. News & World Report* (March 13) already headlines "Failure of A Strategy?" It quotes one veteran observer as saying, "the U.S. is thrashing about like an elephant chasing mice." Casualties are rising sharply though the enemy reduces the scale of his operations. In such a situation, when we cling all the more desperately to the myth that we are fighting a foreign invasion and not a popular insurrection, the temptation for the military to ease their frustration by staging a conventional land invasion of the north must be very great indeed. No doubt contingency papers already plan to describe this not as an escalation but as a temporary move to seal off the supply approaches to the 17th parallel from the North.

The kind of advice the White House must be getting on the risks of such a "temporary" and "preventive" foray into the southern panhandle of North Vietnam was disclosed by Symington in a colloquy with Fulbright on the Senate floor Feb. 28. Symington said that on a recent visit to the Far East he found in talking with CIA, military men and diplomats that only half of them thought the Chinese would intervene if we confined the landing of our troops to the *southern* part of North Vietnam! We are out to see just how far we can go without a clash with China or Russia or both. We are ven-

That Myth Goes Marching On

The myth of what happened during Tet goes marching one. Even Joseph Kraft, who often shows an admirable independence, wrote in his column March 4 (New York World Telegram Journal), "The decisive fact [in Johnson's resumption of bombing] is that as soon as the Tet truce started last month, the military came running to the White House with pictures of supplies being sent from North to South Vietnam by ship and truck." Neither State nor Pentagon charged that any supplies actually crossed the 17th parallel during the truce. If there were any such pictures available, they would have been printed on the front pages. If Mr. Kraft does not believe this, let him ask Senator Jackson why he made three changes in his colloquy with Senator Robert F. Kennedy on p. S3004 of the March 2 Congressional Record. On the floor Jackson said (1) that the North shipped supplies into South Vietnam during the truce but changed this to read "southward [i.e. in North Vietnam itself] into areas where they could support forces fighting in South Vietnam", (2) that the Northerners were invading the South during Tet but changed this to read "backstopping the invasion of another country" and (3) that the North was pushing supplies into South Vietnam but changed this to read "they were getting into an improved position to push supplies into South Vietnam." Kraft will find Jackson realized he could not back up the charges he made on the floor.

How the Biggest and Most Costly Offensive of the War Has Fizzled Out

"War Zone C . . . 75 miles northwest of Saigon has for 20 years been Communism's major stronghold in South Vietnam, and is believed to contain the national headquarters of the Viet Cong . . . To launch Operation Junction City, which cost $25,000,000, the U.S. threw in 30,000 troops, the equivalent of two entire army divisions."

—Time *Magazine, March 3 (dated ahead)*

"Minh Thanh, Vietnam—The biggest U.S. military operation of the Vietnamese war closed out its first week Tuesday [i.e. Mon., Feb. 27, U.S. time]—a bust in a way. Specific U.S. casualty figures cannot be reported, but the number of American dead and wounded so far in Operation Junction City exceeds the number of confirmed enemy dead. About 55 U.S. battalions and two Vietnamese Marine battalions have been poured into the operation, a massive sweep through the enemy stronghold in War Zone C in northern Tay Nihn province near the Cambodian border. In addition, bombs and artillery shells in staggering volume have been expended.

"The total number of enemy dead confirmed as of Tuesday was only 89. "This could be a costly operation if we don't find them (the enemy)," a senior U.S. officer said. "Our casualties keep going up—a tank knocked out here, a booby trap there, snipers picking off our people one or two at a time and we don't have much to show for it yet."

"Some of the troops and junior officers in the field think that the VC have fled into Cambodia. But a senior intelligence officer said he believed there were still five enemy battalions in the immediate operational area and 4 to 6 battalions more within reinforcing distance. 'They may still get away,' he said. 'There's a lot of jungle to slip through but as for now we're convinced they're still here somewhere.' . . . But except for small and infrequent contacts, they have not found any enemy troops."

—*Raymond R. Coffey in* Chicago Daily News, *Feb. 28*

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turing over a quicksand. There may be a limit to the humiliation the Russians will take, and China's instability is hardly a guarantee that its decisions are predictable. The longer this war goes on the greater the risk that it will suddenly flare up into a bigger conflict.

Only Morse and Nelson

Against the signs of this gathering storm, the efforts in Congress to reassert some control over the war seem puny indeed, and the Kennedy speech belated and almost irrelevant as he himself seemed to fear in one passage. Only Morse and Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin dared vote against the supplemental Vietnamese war appropriation, though it was announced in the Senate that Gruening had he not been absent on official business would also have voted "no." Nelson said he did so to express his opposition to "the escalation that is certain to follow," and Morse with that common sense which always looks treasonable in wartime said, "The best way to support the troops is to deny the President the money to kill them." In the House there were none who dared vote against the appropriation and only 18 who voted for an amendment that no funds could be used for "military operations in or over North Vietnam." *

This was in substance the same rider Clark tried hard to attach in the Senate. But there he was supported in the debate only by Fulbright, Morse, Hartke and Young of Ohio. Neither of the Kennedys spoke up, and Robert Kennedy told reporters later he would have voted against this amendment because he feels it would interfere with Presidential prerogatives—in this case, apparently, the right to make and widen war without the consent of Congress. This was also the position later expressed by Javits. Mansfield, fearing that if the Clark amendment were overwhelmingly defeated Johnson might take this as a mandate to escalate the war, seized on a second "fall-back" resolution of Clark's and carried it to victory. It put the Senate on record for negotiations. Weak as it was it had the advantage of demonstrating how small is the minority of "hawks" in the Senate and how wide would be the support of peace talks if Johnson chose to embark upon them. Only 19 Senators voted against negotiation and one of these—Russell—said he was only doing so for constitutional

(Continued on Page Four)

*** The 18 all Democrats: Brown, Burton, Edwards, Rees and Roybal of California; Bingham, Farbstein, Helstoski, Rosenthal, Ryan and Scheuer of New York; Conyers and Diggs of Michigan; Fraser (Minn); Green (Oregon); Kastenmeier (Wis); Mink (Hawaii), and Yates (Ill).**

Bernard B. Fall

There is hardly a writer on Vietnam in Washington or elsewhere who will not miss Bernard Fall. No one in the country knew as much as he about the Vietnamese war, and none was so generous with all who consulted him. These ranged straight across the spectrum from right to left. He was the most tireless and productive writer I have ever known. He worked passionately to produce as much as he could in the few years allotted him. He was not a peacenik but his hatred of official doubletalk often made him the ally of the peace forces. He himself prized above all the respect of the soldiers. He had fought in his teens against the Nazis in the French maquis, and the experience gave him an ineradicable interest in things military, especially in guerrilla war. His latest book on Dienbienphu was more than anything else a memorial to the lost and hopeless bravery of the French defenders. Like Mr. Justice Holmes, whose experience in the Civil War left a similar mark upon him, Fall understood the soldier's devotion. He could say with Holmes "in our youth our hearts were touched with fire." In Vietnam he avoided the high brass to be with the troops, and he would much have preferred to die as he did, with the Marines, on combat patrol along that road one of his earlier books made famous as the "Street Without Joy". His was truly a meteoric career—short and dazzling—but he will long be read and remembered as a soldier-scholar, and I will miss him as a friend.

Answering Readers Digest's Question: Who Speaks for the Civilian Dead in Vietnam?

"News of civilian casualties caused by U.S. air raids over North Vietnam recently swept the world . . . Yet in capitals where indignation ran highest, there was silence about a different kind of killing—the purposeful slaughter committed by Communists . . . While civilian deaths in the North have run to a few hundred, the number of civilians killed by Red attacks in the South since 1957—by the Communists in South Vietnam and by those sent from the North—runs to 11,000 actually counted."

—Readers Digest: *Who Speaks for the Civilian Dead in South Vietnam?, March 1967.*

"Not much is said about how much more we have destroyed there [in South Vietnam] than we have created. Most tragic are the lives we have taken with our military power, lives estimated at 1,000 South Vietnamese a month [or more in one year than Readers Digest claims terrorists have killed in the ten years since 1957—IFS]. These casualties make a mockery of our claim that we are saving the people of Vietnam from Vietcong terrorists."

—Morse (D. Ore) in the Senate Feb. 28, p. S2773

"Nor did the NLF pursue terror in a random or indiscriminate pattern. On the contrary, the killing of individuals was done with great specificity, as for example, pinning a note to the shirtfront of an assassinated government official explaining his crimes . . . The NLF made a concerted effort to make sure that there were no unexplained killings . . . NLF cadres regarded the proper use of terror as terror applied judiciously, selectively and sparingly . . . In general, however, the NLF theoreticians considered terror to be the weapon of the weak, the desperate or the ineffectual guerrilla leader. They held that most objectives could be reached without its use."

—Douglas Pike: Viet Cong, MIT Press 1966

"Wave after wave of B-52s have destroyed some 28 square miles no farther than 30 miles from Saigon. This destruction with magnesium bombs and with our artillery has been so tremendous that an American military spokesman said triumphantly that our attack looked like a Fourth of July celebration. What it looked like to the people of four little villages within 30 miles of Saigon is something else. As one peasant woman said, 'I was very poor in my village, but I did not mind that. I wanted to stay. First the planes passed over our fields. My husband did not know what to do. He stood up. They killed him. I wish I had stayed and been killed, too.' . . . Every hut in that little village has been destroyed. This is an American offensive that will be bitterly remembered and spoken of in Asia 100 years from now."

—Young (D. Ohio) in the Senate, Feb. 27, p. S2648

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When Kennedy Is Willing to Risk His Future For His Country

(Continued from Page Three)

reasons.** The fact that the Administration forces prevented the Clark-Mansfield amendment even from coming to a vote in the House indicates that this was a mandate Johnson did not want.

Johnson "A Man of Peace"?

The disappointing thing about Bobby Kennedy's speech is that he shot off his long-awaited big gun after the battle was over. He wants to lead an opposition but he does not want to be identified with the oppositionists. He wants to draw a section of the party away from Johnson but he also wants to be a prima donna, and to play a lone hand; he makes no effort to work with others in the Senate or the House. He wants the camera to himself. This is good publicity but it is not effective politics. After months of silence on the war, when even Javits had come out against the bombing of the North, Kennedy wanted to make a record that would redound to his credit later as Johnson plunged deeper into war. But he shows no readiness for the dust and heat of battle, and the only team he organizes is with his brother Teddy. He even wants to be against Johnson and yet with him. So he can call Johnson "a man of peace" and say, as he did in his speech, "The fault rests largely with our adversary. He has pursued relentless and unyielding conquest with obdurate unconcern for mounting desolation." That fits our policy far more justly than it does that of the rebels. One could as easily blame London's desolation on its stubborn resistance to *Der Fuehrer*.

Kennedy's formula is tricky. What it boils down to is that we would have a right—and greater world support—to resume bombing if the North did not eventually agree to what we considered a reasonable and honorable settlement. The other side can hardly be blamed for not wanting to negotiate under this threat. Johnson could easily seize on Kennedy's formula and turn it into another of his phony "pauses." It makes one despair of negotiation altogether because there is no reason to believe that our government would either agree to a decent compromise coalition or honorably abide by the terms of a settlement, anymore than we did in 1954 when the rebels were promised the same package—amnesty, democratic liberties, a vote on reunification. They must feel that their best bet is to hang on until some other "Vietnam" (one of them threatens in Arabia, where Nasser casts a shadow over our oil investments) forces us to scale down our effort in Southeast Asia. To go along with a formula like Kennedy's, however well intentioned, might be for Americans of conscience to find themselves trapped later either in resumption of bombing or in another chapter of duplicity like that we wrote with Diem. We have no business being in Vietnam. We have no right to impose our views or our puppets upon it in war *or* negotiation. We are destroying the country, like a raging plague. By right we ought to get out, and pay reparation for our crimes.

Johnson is not a man of peace. He wants a military victory and a political surrender. All the rest is eyewash. The other side knows it and is digging in for a fight that will cost us dearly even if we should win a peace of devastation in the end. When Robert Kennedy is ready to risk his political future, as others in Southeast Asia are risking their lives, to do his duty by his country and say these things clearly, he will deserve the leadership he so desperately wants.

**** The others were Allott, Byrd (W.Va.); Cotton, Curtis, Dominick, Eastland, Griffin, Hansen, Hill, Hollings, Hruska, Long (La); McClellan, Murphy, Stennis, Talmadge, Thurmond and Tower.**

How Times Change—And Judges With Them

Fifteen years ago a U.S. Court of Appeals panel in the District of Columbia split 2-to-1 when the Communist Party asked it to reverse a Subversive Activities Board registration order on the ground that this violated the 5th Amendment. The majority, Prettyman and Danaher, turned down the appeal. Bazelon was then the dissenter. Now Prettyman and Danaher have been joined by a third conservative judge, McGowan, in unanimously adopting Bazelon's minority opinion and ruling in favor of the Communists. The view now upheld by the Court was that put forward 17 years ago by President Truman when he vetoed the Internal Security Act as in conflict with the Fifth Amendment. Congress passed this thought control act, the old Mundt-Nixon bill, over his veto. This latest decision just about dismantles its elaborate machinery. The decision is all the more welcome because anti-war organizations might conceivably have been brought under these provisions — and blacklisted as Communist—if registration had been upheld.

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